

Full Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks

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-As Prepared For Delivery-

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This bill has a strong reputation for common ground and bipartisanship as members traditionally work together to fund construction of military facilities and strive to improve the quality of life and care afforded to our veterans and military families. Thankfully, that tradition continues as this bill provides funding levels that members on both sides agree are appropriate, while avoiding contentious legislative riders that complicate passage.

"This bill is funded at last year's level and it is well within range of what would have been expected if Republicans had stuck to the discretionary number agreed to in the Budget Control Act last August – an allocation of \$1.047 trillion for FY 2013.

"However in this year's first full committee markup, the Republican majority approved subcommittee allocations based on the Ryan budget – a decision that likely reserves the worst cuts for domestic discretionary bills that will come later in the appropriations process. I believe we can save a considerable amount of time if we just returned to the agreement we reached last August – the \$1.047 trillion allocation level for this year – which even the Republican Senate leadership concedes is where we will eventually end up.

"In this bill, military construction is funded at \$10.6 billion, a decrease of \$2.4 billion from the 2012 levels and \$573 million below the budget request. The decrease this year reflects the budget climate, the end of "Grow the Force" requirements, and an overall strategy to place resources in other places.

"I am particularly pleased that the School Construction account includes \$546.9 million for

construction and replacement of Department of Defense Education Activity schools. A total of 10 schools, six schools in the United States and nine schools at overseas installations will be refurbished with this funding. The conditions of some of these schools are shocking. I have been a strong advocate for the modernization of schools serving the children of our nation's servicemembers and I commend the Chairman and Ranking Member on their commitment to this effort.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs would be funded at \$60.7 billion. Overall, the subcommittee recommendation meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, information technology and facilities. The recommendation provides \$74.6 billion for the mandatory VA programs providing compensation and pensions, educational benefits, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance and housing loan programs.

"I want to commend Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Bishop on their good work on this bill. Bipartisanship is very much alive and well on the Appropriations Committee. As I mentioned, this bill does not contain any contentious riders and sufficiently funds military construction accounts, the VA, cemetery expenses and the battle monuments commission.

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman."